

Proposed Operating Rules for Electronic Voting at Town Meeting March 17, 2014

Background

At the 2013 Annual Town Meeting, under Article 32, Town Meeting approved changes to the Town ByLaws (Section 118-17, Voting) establishing the option of employing electronic voting at Town Meeting. Town Meeting also approved an appropriation for the purchase of an electronic voting system. A system has now been purchased and the Moderator, Selectman Joe Pato, the Town Clerk, and staff have initiated testing and training in preparation for the 2014 Annual Town Meeting.

This document is a revised draft of proposed operating rules designed to supplement and support the rules codified in the recent ByLaw changes. This document has incorporated feedback received at the February 11 public hearing, as well as experience gained testing the system.

In order to commence utilizing electronic voting, Town Meeting must first ratify a version of these operating rules by a 2/3 majority vote.

Testing of the System

Staff shall perform a functional test of the system each time it is started for a Town Meeting session.

Town Meeting Member Check-in

At each Town Meeting session, members shall check in upon arrival at the designated checkers' tables, as directed by signage. Upon check-in, each Town Meeting member will be issued a handheld device for electronic voting. Each of these devices has a unique identifying number and is programmed for an individual Town Meeting member. Units will be labeled with both the identifying number and the member's name.

Becoming Familiar With Device

At the start of each session of Town Meeting, the Moderator may conduct one or more practice votes to familiarize Town Meeting members with the devices and the voting procedures that will be followed and to offer an opportunity for all those present to confirm that their devices are functioning properly.

Device Exchange

Devices will have been pre-tested to confirm operability, but an inoperative device may be exchanged at any time for an operating replacement. If necessary to pause the proceedings while a device is exchanged, a member may stand for a point of personal privilege to gain the Moderator's attention.

Electronic Voting Process

As the ByLaw describes, a vote may be taken electronically either at the Moderator's discretion or at the request of 20 or more members who rise for that purpose.

Before taking the vote, the Moderator shall request that members return to their seats, whether with their precinct or their board or committee.

After the Moderator declares voting to be open, a voting period countdown clock will be displayed on the projection screen. The Moderator shall call for those in favor of the motion to press the number 1 on their devices, those voting against the motion to press the number 2, and those abstaining to press 3. Town Meeting members may change their votes at any time until the expiration of the voting period, but not thereafter.

At the end of the voting period, a complete presentation of Town Meeting member votes will be displayed so that members will have an opportunity to verify the accurate recording of their votes.

At the conclusion of the presentation of names and votes, the Moderator will allow challenges, which may be made if, and only if, (a) a Town Meeting member's vote was incorrectly recorded (in which event the tally will be corrected), or (b) any Town Meeting member asserts that a member whose vote was recorded is not present (in which event the Moderator will verify the correctness of the challenge). After any challenges have been resolved, the Moderator shall declare the result of the vote, which may not be doubted or further challenged.

Town Meeting Member Check-out

Each Town Meeting member who leaves a session of Town Meeting, whether during or at the end of the session, or upon dissolution of the Meeting, shall return his/her device to the designated checkers. In order to facilitate members' exit at the close of the meeting, the Moderator may appoint additional checkers.

Town Meeting members who fail to return their devices will be contacted the next day by the Town Clerk's office and shall be liable for a \$75 replacement cost if not returned in operating order within 24 hours.

Under no circumstances may a Town Meeting member leave his/her device unattended or with another member. Likewise, under no circumstances may a Town Meeting member attempt to record a vote with a device other than the one assigned to him/her.

Public Record of Electronic Votes

A backup/physical record of the results of each electronic vote will be created at the time of each vote and provided to the Town Clerk.

The results of all votes taken electronically will be made available electronically to the public within 24 hours of the meeting on the Town's website. Additionally, the official record of Town Meeting will include, for all electronic votes, the record of how each member voted.

Device Storage and Security

Except when in use at a session of Town Meeting, the dedicated computer with the system's software, along with all of the handheld devices and the wireless base receivers, will be secured in a restricted access area for which the Town Clerk must authorize access. The Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk will oversee operation and storage of the system. Additional town staff will be trained in the operation of the system, as backup.

Assistance for Visually Impaired Members

Visually-impaired Town Meeting Members who would like assistance with electronic voting should contact the Town Clerk or the Moderator prior to Town Meeting, and such assistance will be arranged.

Procedure/Rules Modification

Once these procedures are initially adopted by a Town Meeting vote, any future changes may be handled as procedural motions requiring a 2/3 majority vote at any Town Meeting.